



# The Weekly Page

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 9

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## Pages Learn About Legislature



### Pages write bills

Pages worked individually or in small groups to write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. They had their choice of working up a social bill or a fiscal bill to present in a mock committee hearing on Thursday with their partners. Hard decisions had to be made about cutting services and/or raising taxes in the budget committees. Topics for social bills included drunk driving, the death penalty, health care for uninsured children, and helping the disabled access the legal system.

### Health coverage for all Washington children



Olympia – House Bill 3999 was introduced yesterday by Representative Savanna Reid. “This bill addresses the issue of health coverage and will ensure that every child and pregnant woman gets the medical attention he or she needs” said Rep. Reid. Nationally 9.4 million children are uninsured, and 73,000 of those children live in Washington State. One third of uninsured children went without medical care for all of 2003. With this bill, the legislature will establish a state healthcare program for families with children who are at or below the poverty level. The financing and advocacy of this program will be the responsibility of the Department of Health.

### State Senate says NO to death penalty

Olympia – Senate Bill 5606 was introduced yesterday by Senators Sophia Sennett and Anne Seckinger. “This bill addresses the issue of the death penalty and will require DNA evidence before a person can be sentenced to death,” said Sen. Sennett. “Due to the lack of substantial evidence in Washington’s court system, innocent lives are being lost,” said Sen. Seckinger. There are many variables in the justice system that effect the outcome of a court case. If DNA testing is not conclusive, the highest sentence for a felon would be life in prison, according to the bill. “DNA and new scientific technology will enhance correct sentencing in the future,” said Sen. Sennett.



### Ocean cleanup to begin



Olympia – Senate Bill 7654 was introduced yesterday by Senator Emily Neder. “This bill addresses the issue of our polluted oceans and will make the earth a healthier place,” said Sen. Neder. This bill will prohibit the sale of any plastic items in the state and will require all boats in the ocean to be inspected for harmful items that could injure marine life or pollute the water.

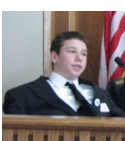
### Cut-off week concludes bill action in house of origin

This week all bills had to be voted out of their house of origin committees by Thursday evening, and legislators were busy making last minutes decisions and changes on those bills. Pages got a first-hand look at how parliamentary procedure is used by legislators on the floor of each chamber as they considered each piece of legislation. Over 2,000 bills will be introduced in the two chambers this session, but only about 15-20 percent will actually make it to the end of the law-making process. Pages were busy on the floors of both the House and the Senate, delivering documents, listening to their legislators express their views and watching the voting process. For the remainder of the session, all bills will be transferred to the opposing chamber for hearings and deliberation. Bills which make it out of the remaining chambers will be sent to the Governor for her approval. The session is scheduled to end on Sunday, April 26.

### Death without cruelty proposed

Olympia – House Bill 1222 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Shayne Robinson and Andy Miller.

“This bill addresses the issue of the death penalty and insure that Washington State’s death row inmates not be put to death in a cruel manner,” said Rep. Miller. Currently lethal injection uses three chemicals that can cause extreme pain if the execu-



tioner administers them incorrectly,” said Rep. Robinson. This bill will eliminate the risk of a painful death by replacing the 3-drug cocktail with a one-drug overdose. This is the same method used by people who will take advantage of the new I-1000 death with dignity law recently passed by state citizens.

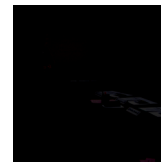
### Senate increases food stamp availability

Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Anna Laura Kastama introduced Senate Bill 5151, which addresses the issue of hunger. “The bill is a good one because it will invest time and effort in feeding a large number of eligible Washingtonians who have hit hard times,” said Sen. Kastama. This bill addresses the sudden change in cost of living and the growing lower class. Currently only 68 percent of those who qualify for food stamps receive them. With demands of assistance rising, an estimated 215,000 Washington households live with hunger or the threat of hunger. “The best solution to ensure the health of our people is investing more funds into the food stamp program, which this law will do,” said Sen. Kastama.



### Help for the homeless

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Halee Spencer and Marlee Chavez introduced Senate Bill 5511, which addresses the issue of homeless people in Washington. “The bill is a good one because it will help people get back on their feet,” said Sen. Spencer. If this bill becomes law, all homeless shelters will employ therapists to help with drug/alcohol abuse, depression, and other mental problems. Employment consultants will also be available to help the homeless find jobs.



### House says cuts/taxes only way to end state’s financial crisis

Olympia—Yesterday, the House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from Representatives Abdul Conteh, Ellie Zuckerman, Lindsay Swick, and Jessica Bowman regarding the projected revenue shortfall for the 2009-2011 biennium and the suggested remedies to balance the state operating budget. “We are in a terrible economic crisis, the worst we’ve seen in decades,” said Rep. Bowman. Among the list of cuts offered were slashing government spending on goods and services by 25 percent, closing the state film office, and reducing personal body guards for the Governor and Lt. Governor. “Over the next two years, the general public will suffer from involuntary cuts in services and goods, so it is only right that the government should sacrifice, as well. This will save the state \$200 million,”



said Rep. Zuckerman. The representatives did not feel that the Governor or Lt. Governor would be in any more danger with the cut in protection. All three cuts would save over \$200 mil-

lion. Although many legislators had made campaign promises not to raise taxes, the committee saw a need to make up for lost revenues by raising the tax on cigarettes, liquor, soda, and prescription drugs, raising over one billion dollars. “Prescription drugs are very necessary for people. A lot turn to medicine for help when they need it. A tax will not stop them from buying the drugs and it will raise \$501 million for our state,” said Rep. Swick. In addition, Rep. Zuckerman advocated a temporary bump in the sales tax from 6.5 percent to 7 percent. “We need to make sure that many key programs in our state keep running and this will raise nearly a billion dollars,” she said. “I know times are bad, but we should come out of this situation in good shape if we make some sacrifices now,” said Rep. Conteh.





## Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.**

As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.



## Extra hour of sleep requested for tired teens

Olympia – House Bill 3098 was introduced yesterday by Representative Rafael Madera. “This bill addresses the issue of school start times for sleep deprived teens and will improve the academic success for high school students,” said Rep. Madera. Research indicates that school bells that ring as early as 7a.m. in many parts of the country stand in stark contrast with adolescent sleep patterns and needs. A recent poll conducted by the NSF found that 60 percent of children under the age of 18 complained of being tired during the day, according to their parents, and 15 percent said they fell asleep at school during the year. “Over time, sleep deprivation leads to serious consequences for academic achievement, social behavior, and the health and safety of our nation's youth,” said Rep. Madera. This bill will permit school districts to institute flexible start times so students can choose to begin their school day early or late.

## First amendment rights of students protected

Olympia – House Bill 3210 was introduced yesterday by Representative Sam Margolis. “This bill addresses First Amendment rights and will grant full freedom of speech to students in high school and college,” said Rep. Margolis. A student at Bethel High School was suspended for inappropriate language in his graduation speech and took his case to the Supreme Court, which upheld the school district’s decision. “Students should not lose their rights when they walk into school,” said Rep. Margolis. This bill will require all public schools to honor the First Amendment and will put disciplinary rules into effect for administrators infringing on a student’s right to free speech.

## Is your child uninsured?

Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Allicia Llewellyn introduced Senate Bill 5001, which addresses the issue of uninsured children. “The bill is a good one because it helps keep the kids of Washington healthy,” said Sen. Llewellyn. This bill gives families who have children and no financial access to hospitals an option in seeking medical help for them. The bill gives free medical insurance to children under the age of 18 whose families cannot afford insurance and who make less than \$60,000 a year. Insurance does not include dental care or prescription drugs. Funding will come from a tax on over-the-counter drugs. The bill is yet to be heard in a Senate floor session.



## Senate tries to balance budget

Olympia—Yesterday Senators Michael Roberts, Josh Ekberg, and Esther Doss, met with the Senate Ways and Means Committee to pound out hard solutions to a serious budget shortfall predicted for the next biennium. “There just doesn’t seem to be any way around raising some taxes,” said Sen. Ekberg, who suggested a five cent tax on soda and a 50 cent increase on a pack of cigarettes. “Neither of these is a big increase. Many

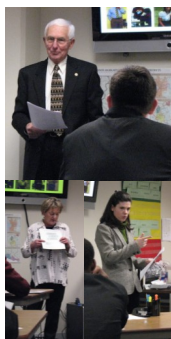


people won’t stop buying the items with this modest raise, and those addicted to ciga-

rettes will pay just about any amount to get what they want or need,” said Rep. Doss. Senator Doss and Sen. Ekberg also advocated an unpopular raise in the sales tax. “This hike will only be .5 percent and will be temporary for the duration of the biennium. This is a tax that people have control over: if they don’t want to pay the extra, they can cut down on their buying. And it will raise nearly a billion dollars,” said Sen. Ekberg. Other proposals included cuts in goods and services in all government sectors by 1/4. “There is a lot of waste that we could eliminate,” said Sen. Roberts. “During this budget crisis, the citizens have been forced to cut back in their own lives. The government can set a positive example for our citizens by doing this and we’ll save \$200 million,” he said. In addition, Sen. Doss suggested doing away with the \$140 million class-size reduction increase. “While reducing class sizes could possibly improve student-teacher communication, the proposed amount of money would only reduce the typical class by about one student. Such a large amount of money is better spent fixing the deficit than on a program that would have so little impact in the long run.”

## Guest speakers visit Page School

Lindsey Pryor from the office of the Secretary of State, Parks Commissioner Joe Taller, and Justice Susan Owens of the State Supreme Court joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about their jobs. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker's questions.



## New bill prevents plastic pollution

Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Tyson Robecker introduced Senate Bill 5555, which addresses the issue of plastic bag pollution. "The bill is a good one because it will help save our environment," Sen. Robecker. "Because plastic bags take hundreds of years to break down, every year our seas become home to more and more bags that find their way there through sewers and waterways." If this bill becomes law, all stores currently using plastic bags will be required to substitute them for paper, which is recyclable and reusable.

## Disabled get easier access to legal system



Olympia – Senate Bill 5636 was introduced yesterday by Senators Brittany Westcott and Justin Wargo. "This bill addresses the issue of disabled citizens and will allow them better access to the legal system," said Sen. Westcott. If this

becomes a law, the Legislature will establish a clearing house for state lawyers who handle disabled clients and will set up a 1-800 number for easy access to their services. "This solution makes it easier for disabled people to find lawyers, and it will help lawyers serve their clients more effectively," said Sen. Wargo.

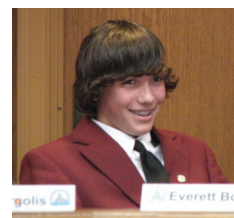
## Senators advocate for nutrition labels for school lunches

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Britta Geisler, Meykia Smith, and Alex Bassett introduced Senate Bill 5708, which addresses the issue of nutrition labels for school lunches. "The bill is a good one because it will help to reduce childhood obesity," said Sen. Geisler. This bill will require schools to display nutritional

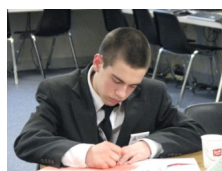
information about the food that they serve. Schools will need to include calorie counts as well as sodium, fat, protein, carbohydrate, vitamin, mineral and ingredient amounts. By posting these nutrition facts, students will be better able to choose their food wisely and it will decrease the percentage of obese children and help them lead a healthier life.

## New school times for K-12 students

Olympia – Senate Bill 7998 was introduced yesterday by Senator Everett Boker. "This bill addresses the issue of school start times for elementary, junior high, and high school students and will improve the academic success of students," said Sen. Boker. According to a recent survey, the average high school student is getting less than 8 1/2 hours of sleep per night, less than the 9 1/2 hours that experts recommend. This bill will require districts to reverse the start times for elementary and high schools so the older students can get more sleep. "Now kids will be able to pay more attention in class and be more productive," said Sen. Boker.



## Rep. Roberts gets ahead of head injuries

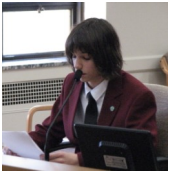


Olympia – House Bill 2222 was introduced yesterday by Representative Calvin Roberts. "This bill addresses the issue of head injuries and will require a doctor's permission before high school athletes can resume playing a sport after acquiring a concussion," said Rep. Roberts. "Many high school athletes push themselves through the pain because their coaches tell them to keep going and they don't want to quit playing, but there are putting themselves at greater risk for more serious injuries later," said Rep. Roberts. After a doctor's permission is granted for playing, a coach still can keep an athlete out longer.

## Competitive edge results in Jeopardy win

On Friday pages tested their knowledge of the Legislative process in a spirited game of *Jeopardy*. Winning teams were awarded certificates and brightly colored stickers that they wore proudly for the rest of the day.

## Foucault proposes gang violence solution



Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Calvin Foucault introduced Senate Bill 6473, which addresses the issue of gang violence. “The bill is a good one because it keeps the public safer,” said Sen. Foucault. The bill will create new community centers and after-school programs across the state. It was designed to keep youth gang-members off the street. “The existing policy regarding gang violence only increases sentences and supervision, but it has been proven to be ineffective,” said Sen. Foucault. After-school programs will occupy buildings already available, be run by volunteers, and supervised by extra police officers who will be paid from the operating budget.

## Bill passed to halt drunk driving fatalities

Olympia – House Bill 3998 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Jarrett Doyle and Anthony Widick. “This bill addresses the issue of drunk driving and will help reduce fatalities caused by inebriated motorists,” said Rep. Widick.



This bill will require anyone convicted of a DUI to install a Blood Alcohol Ignition Interlock Device (BAIID) in their car. Drivers would have to blow into this device to start their car. If the BAIID registers alcohol in their system, then the device will lock the ignition and the car will not start. “This may not stop anyone from getting drunk, but it will sure stop that person from getting into a car and killing himself or someone else,” said Rep. Doyle.

## Youthful offenders to be tried in juvenile courts only

Olympia – Senate Bill 5289 was introduced yesterday by Senator Annika Skaugrud. “This bill addresses the issue of juvenile justice and will keep youth from being charged as adults,” said Sen. Skaugrud. A research study on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice tested more than 1,400 people between the ages of 11 and 24 on their response to several hypothetical legal situations. One-third of the 11-13 year olds and one-fifth of the 14-15 year olds could not understand the proceedings or help lawyers defend them. “This shows that they would be incompetent in the court and should not be charged as adults,” said Sen.

Skaugrud. If this bill becomes a law, no one under the age of 16 will be allowed to be tried as an adult.

## Conclusive DNA evidence required for death sentencing



Olympia – House Bill 2645 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Josh Armstrong and Alisa Lee. “This bill addresses the issue of the death penalty and will make DNA evidence mandatory for a death penalty sentence,” said Rep. Armstrong. In recent times, 129 death-row inmates have been exonerated with DNA testing. Some victims of mistaken identity have been put to death before evidence was found that would clear them. “The death of an innocent is disturbing to society and it should never happen,” said Rep. Lee. If there is no DNA evidence available, this law would require a sentence of life in prison without parole.

## Children should be healthy

Olympia – Senate Bill 5678 was introduced yesterday by Senator Matt Stubbs. “This bill addresses the issue of childhood vaccinations and will prevent a lot of communicable diseases in Washington,” said Sen. Stubbs. An unvaccinated child who contracts a preventable infectious disease becomes a vector of infection for those with weaker immune systems, who are more susceptible. Most of the infections that vaccinations defeat can have severe and even deadly consequences. For example, when a small group of students were not vaccinated in Monroe, many of them contracted chicken pox. “Nearly 400 unvaccinated kids were kept from school to keep it from spreading in the community. Vaccinations work,” said Sen. Stubbs. This bill will require all public school children to be vaccinated by 6th grade.



## Burn ban laws questioned

Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Josh Knight introduced Senate Bill 5777, which addresses the issue of regional burn bans. “The bill is a good one because it will result in fewer fires in the state of Washington and educate those interested in burning,” said Sen. Knight. “People are afraid that the environment is weak and that we need to protect it. However, there is way too much fuss about it and the environment is not as fragile as is avowed,” said Sen. Knight. “Rural residents desire to get rid of common yard waste but are not allowed to due to the current laws.”





## Income tax replaces property tax to fund schools

Olympia – House Bill 2764 was introduced yesterday by Representative Jordan Frost. “This bill addresses the issue of K-12 education and create a more fair way to fund schools,” said Rep. Frost. Statistics show that every 29 seconds another student gives up on school, resulting in more than one million American high school students dropping out of school each year. Dropouts are more likely to be unemployed, in poor health, living in poverty, on public assistance, and single parents with children who will drop out of high school. This bill would repeal the property taxes in the state and replace them with an income tax. “The money would be spent to establish higher expectations, more individualized instruction, alternative learning environments, and professional development for teachers,” said Rep. Frost. “The bill will help not only dropouts but also those who need a more challenging academic experience. We will prepare our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

## Stricter requirements meant to reduce abortions in state



Olympia – House Bill 1013 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Audrey Eggleston and Liliana Nieto. “This bill addresses the issue of abortion and will try to minimize the numbers of abortions in the state of Washington,” said Rep. Eggleston. “We

believe abortion is unconstitutional because it denies the baby the right to life,” said Rep. Nieto. This bill will require all women under the age of 21 to have permission from a parent or legal guardian to get an abortion. Young women under the age of 16 will be prohibited from the procedure. Women will be limited to only one abortion.

## Elderly drivers a safety hazard

Olympia – Senate Bill 5050 was introduced yesterday by Senator Thomas Stanford. “This bill addresses the issue of elderly drivers and will require people over the age of 65 to renew their licenses every two years,” said Sen. Stanford. To renew their licenses they will have to first pass both a vision and mental health test. Studies have shown that a person’s risk evaluation, cognitive capacity, and decision-making abilities decrease with age. In addition, many elderly people take medications to counteract these problems. Many of these medications cause adverse side effects such as drowsiness, confusion, and impaired memory. “This solution to an increasing problem will make our roads and our elderly citizens safer,” said Sen. Stanford.



## Page program over 100 years old



The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Page duties today are much more professional..



## Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at: [www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/](http://www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/). This newsletter has been posted there.